

(TMI Journeys - February 2019)

THE WIDOW MAKER: A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

As near-death experiences (NDEs) continue gaining recognition in contemporary cultures, more people feel freer to report the life changing NDEs they've had. The NDE experiencer's account below is an excellent example.

My eyes opened and staring down at me were three unfamiliar faces. "Sir," one of them said in an indistinct voice, "we are taking you to the hospital."

"I can't go." Though I felt I was screaming, the words barely escaped my lips. "My kids. My children are upstairs. I need to take care of them."

"You've had a heart attack sir; we must go now!"

"But my children. What about my children? They're upstairs. I need to go to them."

"They'll be fine. We have to go now. Sir, your heart had stopped." I could feel the table below me moving as I was wheeled outside. The night air was cold against my naked chest. The stars blurred above me as I was brought to the vehicle. Then a bump, a slight lift in elevation, and I was in the vehicle.

"My kids," I could feel the lump in my throat as well as the great pain that crossed my chest. "I can't leave them. I need them." The words were barely audible. I could feel the warmth of a tear roll down my cheek as the doors behind me closed and the vehicle started to move.

It was just another Thursday. Well, not exactly. The Ex said she could drop the kids off at my office instead of me having to pick them up at school. That was a help as it let me avoid the 90-minute interruption to my day. Lunch consisted of Mixed Fried Rice from the local Chinese restaurant and a canned Arnold Palmer. As the holidays were approaching, things were quiet around the workplace.

"There's just too much traffic. You'll have to pick them up at my office." In a rare moment she called me instead of texting me. So instead of leaving my office and returning 90 minutes later with children in tow, I was leaving an hour early for the day and heading in the opposite direction. No biggie. We had nothing already on the menu for dinner. Given my lunch, I probably wasn't going to eat anything for dinner anyway. Maybe just some ice cream after they went to bed. The kids could have frozen pizzas or mac and cheese, or something else they might like. I left the office at 4, finally hooked up with them at 6 and was home by 6:30.

The kids wanted frozen pizza, and as my son has become quite adept at microwaving, I set him on the task of making dinner. I was going upstairs to “rest” as I told them. I was actually planning on jumping online to order their last few Hanukkah presents. I changed into my sweats and t-shirt, got into bed, and started searching for those gifts. And then there was a pain across my upper chest I had not felt the likes of before.

I put down my iPad and lay flat on my back. I was having no trouble breathing. It just felt like there was a giant bubble across my chest that needed to get out. I reached for a half empty bottle of lemon sparkling water on my nightstand and drank it down in two gulps. A couple of small burps followed, but no relief. I worked my way to the bathroom (I was feeling a little dizzy but still had no trouble breathing). Opened the top drawer and pulled out some Pepto Bismol. “This should do the trick,” I thought. I chewed two tablets and sat on the floor in the bathroom. I was sure it was just gas; after all, my arm wasn’t numb (isn’t that a warning sign?) so I knew it couldn’t be anything too bad. I wasn’t about to call 911 and find out it was nothing.

The Pepto wasn’t helping. I started coughing. I reached for my phone (which had been sitting on the countertop in the bathroom) and considered dialing those three important digits. Nope, didn’t want to make a false alarm. Then I heard some arguing downstairs. The kids were “discussing” who was having which frozen pizza, and they were getting louder. I got myself up on my feet with the help of the aforementioned counter.

Slowly I walked to the top of the stairs, just outside the bathroom. “Guys,” I tried to shout but it came out more gritty, like I needed to clear my throat. “Can you keep it down, please!” And they continued to argue. I shouted down a little louder the next time and asked my son to come upstairs. I was getting fairly dizzy at this point and sat down on the floor of the bedroom.

My son came up and I asked him to get my phone and call 911. I was beyond caring if it was a false alarm. My chest was still tight, I was dizzy, and now I was starting to get a bit short of breath.

He returned with the phone and as he dialed I told him to tell them that his father was having extreme chest pains. The phone was answered; he repeated my words verbatim. I could hear them ask another question. He began to answer, then looked at me a bit confused and a bit scared. I was feeling a little less dizzy, so I took the phone from him. I was able to answer the rest of their questions. Age. Address. Name. They told me they were on their way.

With the help of my son I was able to make it downstairs without any real problems. I lay down on the couch and instructed the two kids to get the dog into the cage and to get the front door open. They did promptly without questioning. My daughter looked to me with fear and a tear in her eye. I gave her a weak smile. “Now, one of you wait by the gate (the security gate for our neighborhood) and one of you stay at the door.” As soon as the door was opened I could hear an approaching siren. Within two minutes, five men carrying equipment came through the

door. "Okay, get upstairs guys. Go to your rooms and shut the doors. I'll come get you in a few minutes." They did.

Suddenly, I was surrounded by five men. There was a stethoscope on my chest, a blood pressure cuff on my arm. They were setting up some electrical equipment. It all happened in a blur. They were asking me questions quickly barely allowing an answer before the next one came. One of them turned to me and said he was going to give me some medicine. I started to nod. My head felt light. The room blurred. I was gone.

I reached out for his shoulder. I don't remember if he was young or old, I'm not even sure I ever knew. We stood facing a river, he a few feet ahead of me. The river was a clear blue and reflected a sun I didn't see in the sky. Beyond the river was green. Lots of green. There were trees and bushes and grass and buildings, yes buildings. Small structures, as if it was a village or small town. Nothing was familiar to me. Not the person in front of me, the river, or the land on the distant shore.

I stood on dirt or sand. The whole area was vacant, sterile, devoid of life. But there was the green of life beyond the river. And I reached for him and I wanted to cross, to crossover to the land beyond.

Looking back, it was interesting. I mean the heart attack itself had me change my eating habits, start exercising, and stop smoking. I didn't give the experience too much thought until I spoke with my doctor. That is when I found out that the artery that caused the heart attack was called the widow maker and less than 10% of those having it happen live (thus the name).

He then asked me questions as to what happened, which is why I was able to better define the experience. All I remembered prior to his in my discussion was a man in front of me and a growth across the river. What really hit me was when he told me that when your heart stops and you are basically dead, you don't dream. That jolted me.

I've never been one to believe a great deal about out-of-body experiences and auras and all of that (though I am a big Star Wars fan and definitely buy into the force, seriously). But this gave me a whole new appreciation for the alternative ways of looking at things. I ultimately believe the man was my father and he was leading me back to life. And I think it was for my kids. For them not to lose their father, especially pretty much in front of their eyes.